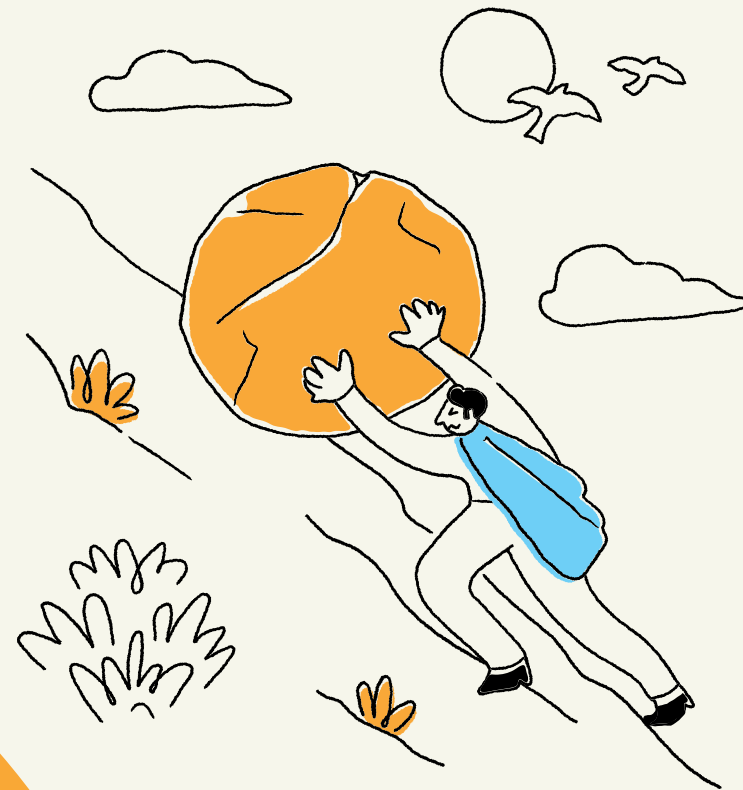




FlowiNG
FORWARD



The 2025 Small Business Marketing Guide



Discover the flow of small business marketing

Successful businesses never stand still...

They're constantly in a state of ebb and flow – from starting out to scaling up and every stage in between.

At VistaPrint, we see firsthand how insightful, data-backed marketing can help small businesses go from just keeping up to authentically connecting with consumers and building real communities.

So, we partnered with Wix to survey 1,000 small business owners (SBOs) and 1,000 consumers across the US to understand how they're navigating the ups and downs of the last 12 months, what marketing strategies are working and why, and what they're planning for the year ahead.

Get ready to expand, experiment and evolve – one unique insight at a time.



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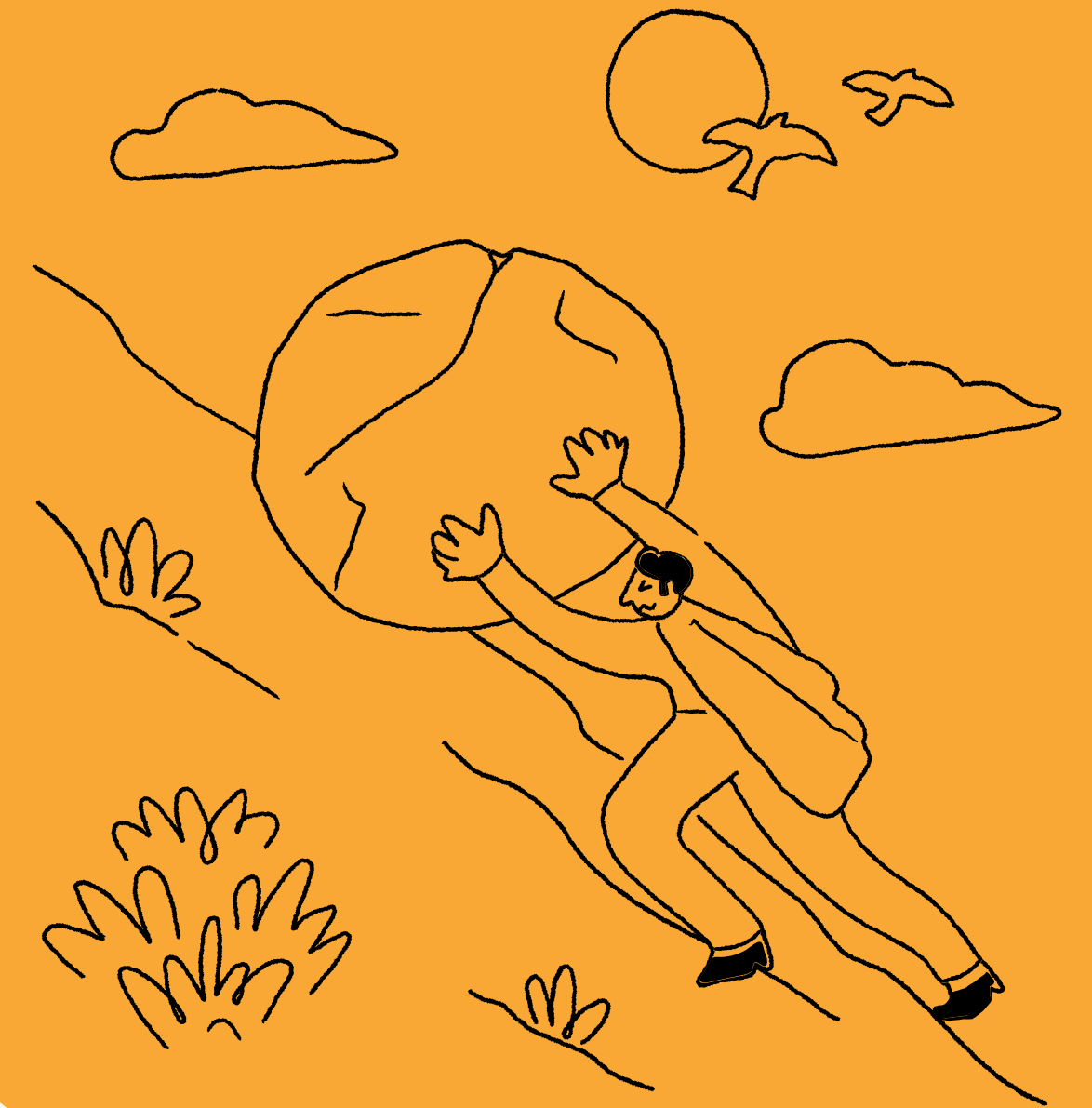
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Methodology: The data for this report was collected by VistaPrint and Wix from 1,000 small business owners and 1,000 consumers based in the US via the market research platform Corus in April 2025.

Community & competition

The values, drivers & challenges of small business

From staying true to their north star to understanding when to lean into their unique edge, small business owners (SBOs) are showing us they feel confident in their ability to not just stay afloat but rise in the face of uncertain headwinds.



The WHY behind the business

Small business owners are passionate about their work but also practical about creating the life they want. They're showing us that it's not just about running a business but also about pushing for positive change and building authentic communities.

Top three drivers for SBOs:

Flexibility and control of their schedule

53%

Wanting to strike out on their own

48%

Financial independence

46%

39% said they were pursuing a passion, revealing that personal values matter!

Their key values:

Being a purpose-driven brand

57%

Supporting local community issues

42%

Being environmentally conscious

39%

Only 8% of businesses didn't think supporting broader issues was important.

What does success actually look like?

- 1 **Growing my business so it sustains my lifestyle**
- 2 **Having a good work-life balance**
- 3 **Building a loyal community around my business**

More unique less competition

Standing out isn't optional anymore. Small businesses that described themselves as totally unique were more likely to report that it was easier to reach and connect with customers than the average.

64% of one-of-a-kind businesses say it's easy to reach customers.

Who are SBOs competing with?

48%

52%

Large corporations and chain stores

Other small businesses

If you're running a small boutique cafe, your competition might not be a Starbucks or McDonald's but the other specialty cafe down the street!



Consumers are excited to support small businesses for **connection, quality & community.**

Compared to last year, people are shopping at small businesses:

36%

more

59%

the same

5%

less



Uncovering community

What consumers are looking for in a small business:

- 1 They support local community issues
- 2 They are a purpose-driven brand
- 3 They are environmentally conscious



Psst! Jump ahead to **Future focus** to find out what consumers want small business owners to lean into over the next year and beyond!



**How do you build an
authentic community?
One connection at a time.**

“

I value small businesses for their personal touch, community impact, unique products and passionate service.



“

Sometimes small businesses are a bit more pricey than large corporations. But I often find that the products are better quality. That matters more to me.



“

My family owns a small business, and I know how hard it is, so I like to support others doing the same.

“

Shopping at a small business makes me feel like I am supporting my community.



Why they're shopping small

“

I feel good supporting local small businesses because it helps the area I call home.

“

It makes me feel like a better human.

54%

want to support the local economy

38%

think small businesses have more unique products

36%

say they receive more personalized customer service

35%

prefer a location that is convenient and easy to get to

The challenges are real too

When it comes to the ups and downs of running a business, standing out from the competition emerges as the number one hurdle most SBOs continue to face – and consumers are feeling it as well.



Top three challenges:

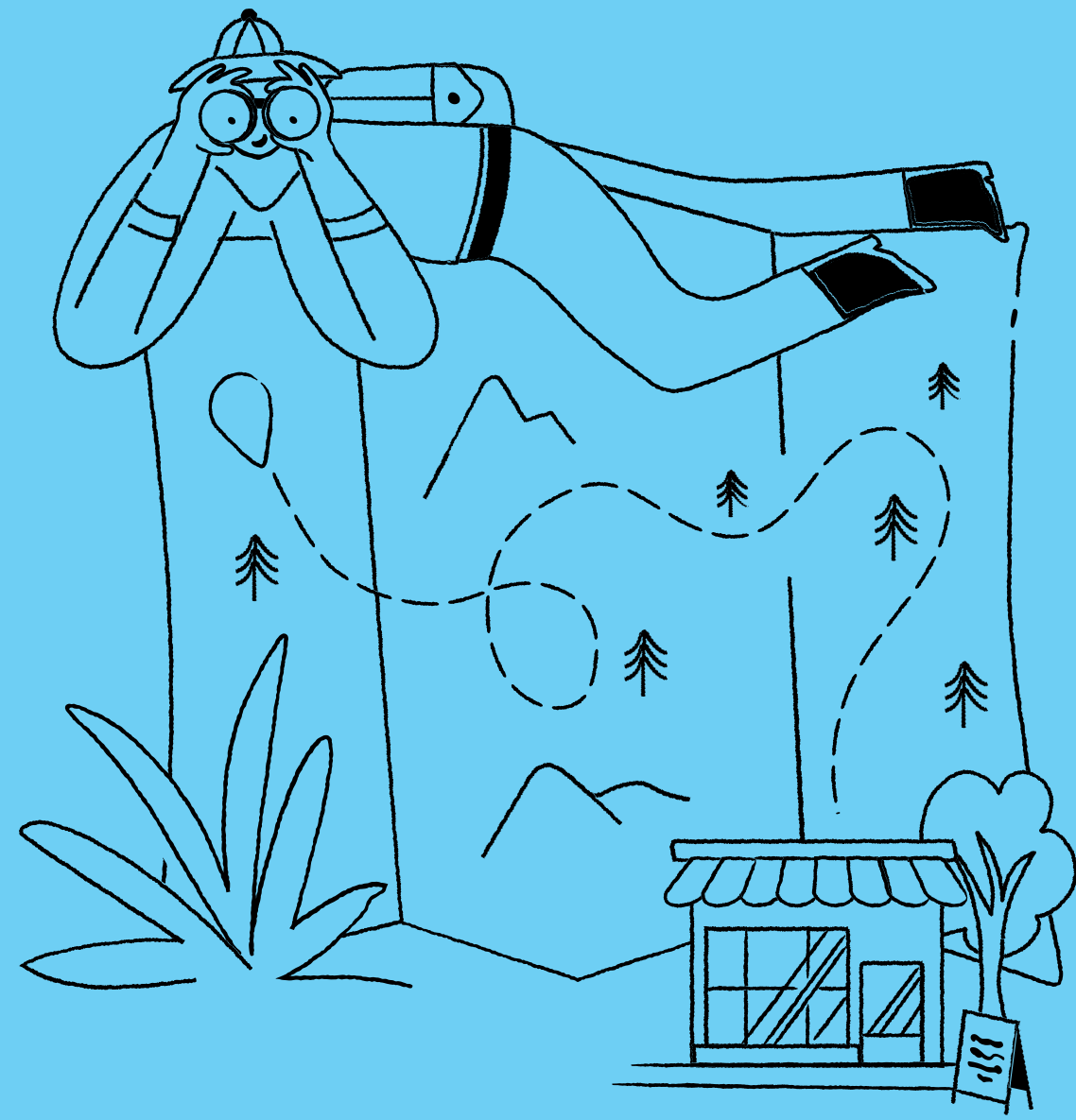
- 1 Standing out among the competition
- 2 Budgets and other costs
- 3 Choosing the best marketing strategies

Consumers are also feeling the market saturation

62% of consumers report struggling to choose between products and services from similar small businesses. This highlights just how important it is to find what makes your business unique!

ONLY 9% SAID
THEY HAVEN'T
FELT THIS

Points of connection



How businesses and consumers are finding each other

When it comes to where small businesses and consumers connect, in-person shopping and local communities are still the go-to, but interest in online and international connections is anything but an afterthought. In fact, the data reveals that balancing all these approaches rather than focusing on one could be the key to truly growing, flowing and thriving.

Consumers are seeking face-to-face experiences over digital ones, but interest in online shopping is still strong.



36% prefer to shop online

INCLUDING
SOCIAL MEDIA



64% prefer to shop in person

And it's no surprise really, because

67% of consumers find in-person connections easier to cultivate than digital ones.

Local is trending

While online shopping and international markets are having an effect, it's clear that local communities are what consumers are most drawn to.

Where consumers come from changes with the age of the business

Businesses less than a year old are more likely to target international consumers, while businesses over twenty years old stay local.

7%

say most of their customers are international

31%

say most of their customers are nationwide

62%

say most of their customers come from the local area



Top three reasons for dropping into a local small business:

1

A trusted recommendation

2

Walking past a storefront

3

Seeing outdoor signage like posters or banners

What keeps consumers coming back?

Product
quality

73%

Location and
convenience

57%

Great customer
support

47%

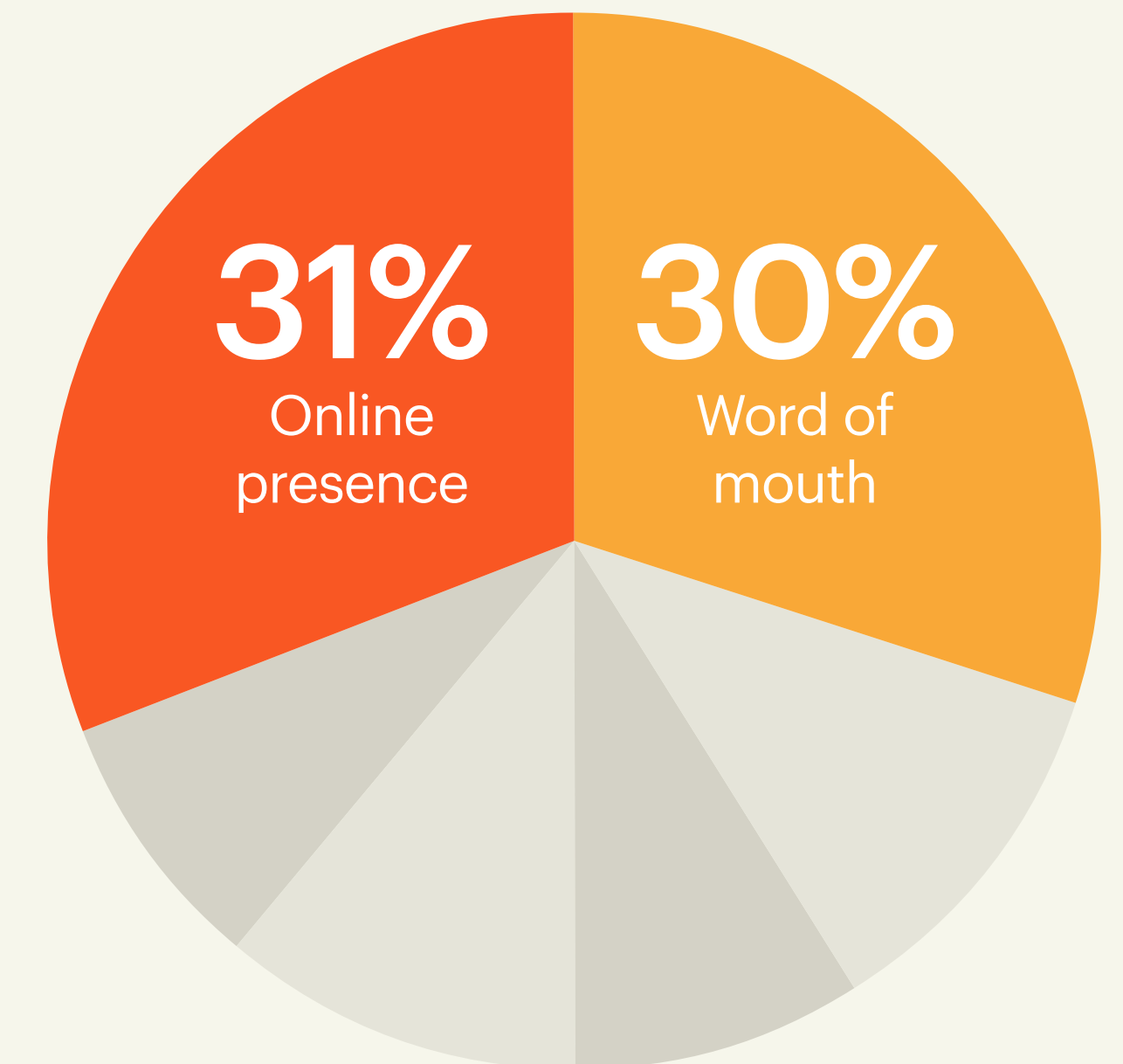
Consumers want to support their local communities while also prioritizing what's closest and easiest to get to — usually their own neighborhood!



Feeling supported

No matter where you focus your attention, be it online or in-store, looking after your customers when things go wrong is essential.

Biggest impact on SBOs this year:



Our question to SBOs: how could you balance these two approaches and connect with your audience wherever they are?



Want to attract more local customers and grow your business in all the right ways? Head to our blog and [read our article](#) on growing your local presence.



Great marketing meets your customers where they're at and creates a moment of connection right then and there.

What tactics are working

The devil is in the details when it comes to the marketing strategies that get results. While traditional and digital tactics have their strengths and weaknesses, and promotional products emerge as a powerful standalone approach, the data reveals room for greater alignment between what small businesses favor and what consumers value most.



← (AND WHAT'S NOT)

Strategies in motion

Traditional marketing pulls weight, but where are the opportunities?



How consumers are finding new businesses

45% Direct mail
36% TV/radio ads
32% Local signage

What small businesses are relying on

58% Business cards
33% Promotional products
32% Direct mail

VS.

This points to a potential opportunity for bigger offline investments like media ads, which are rated highly by consumers but only receive lukewarm interest from small business owners. A word of caution, however, as TV and radio ads come with a more significant price tag.



Promotional products emerge as a powerful standalone tactic

They remain a go-to for brand building, but there's a noticeable mismatch between what businesses offer and what consumers actually want.

This discrepancy may reflect budget differences or simply a lack of awareness. For small businesses looking to boost brand affinity, understanding your audience's preferences and aligning your branded products could offer an easy win.



Want to see how interest in promotional products changes across the generations? Check out [Know your audience](#) for a generational deep dive!

48% are staying cozy in a hoodie

28% of businesses are stocking them



62% love feeling free in a Tee!

47% of businesses are stocking them



47% are thirsty for drinkware

29% of businesses are stocking them



39% want to write it down with a branded pen

and

43% of businesses are stocking them

EVERYONE'S ON THE SAME PAGE HERE



To get your promo products flying off the shelves, make them practical, on-brand and in style!



Digital marketing isn't just a nice-to-have, it's fundamental.

Consumers and SBOs agree on what's working in the digital space, with both parties preferring the same top three tactics when searching (or being found!) online.

The top three online tactics getting results:

- 1 Social media
- 2 Websites
- 3 Online reviews

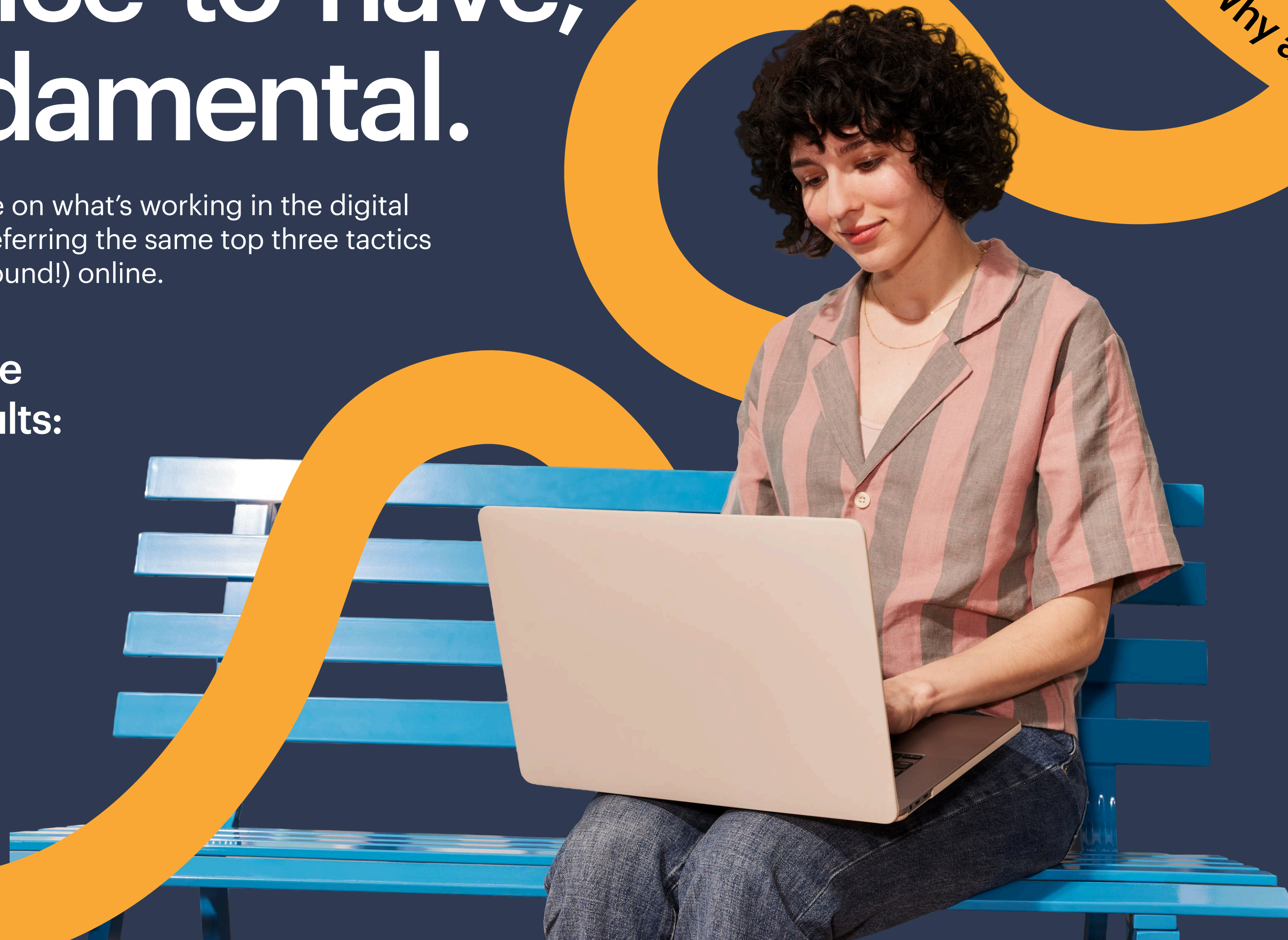
Why a great website is key

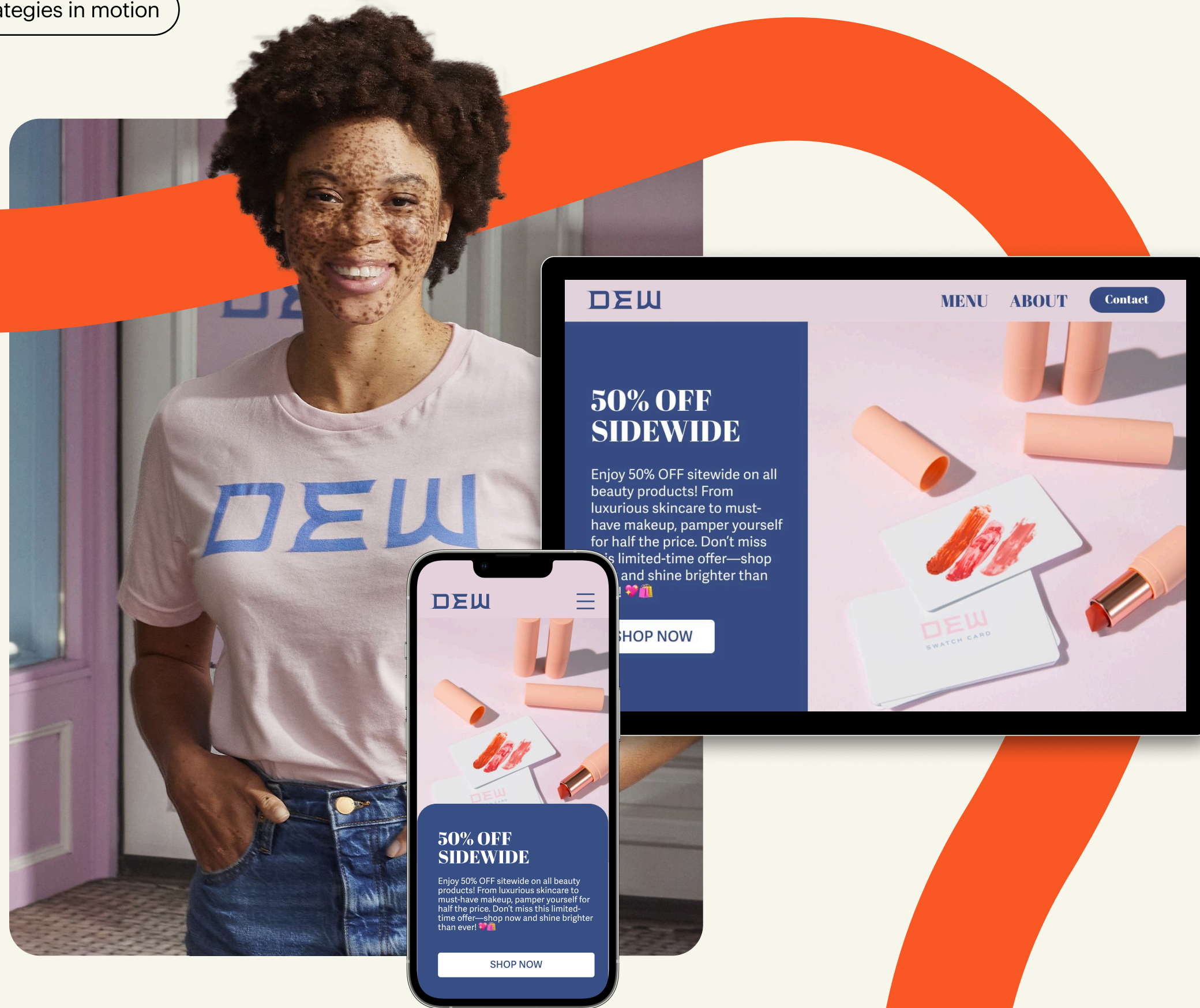
76%

of SBOs say their website is either "essential" or "important" for growth and attracting customers

Only 6%

say it wasn't important at all!





A strong digital presence plays a pivotal role in purchase decisions

IF YOU DON'T HAVE A WEBSITE, YOU'RE MISSING OUT!

How important is it for a business to have a branded website? Consumers say...



81%

"It's important"

15%

"It's not a dealbreaker"

4%

"I wouldn't notice either way"

What happens when you don't have a website?

Will look elsewhere

42%

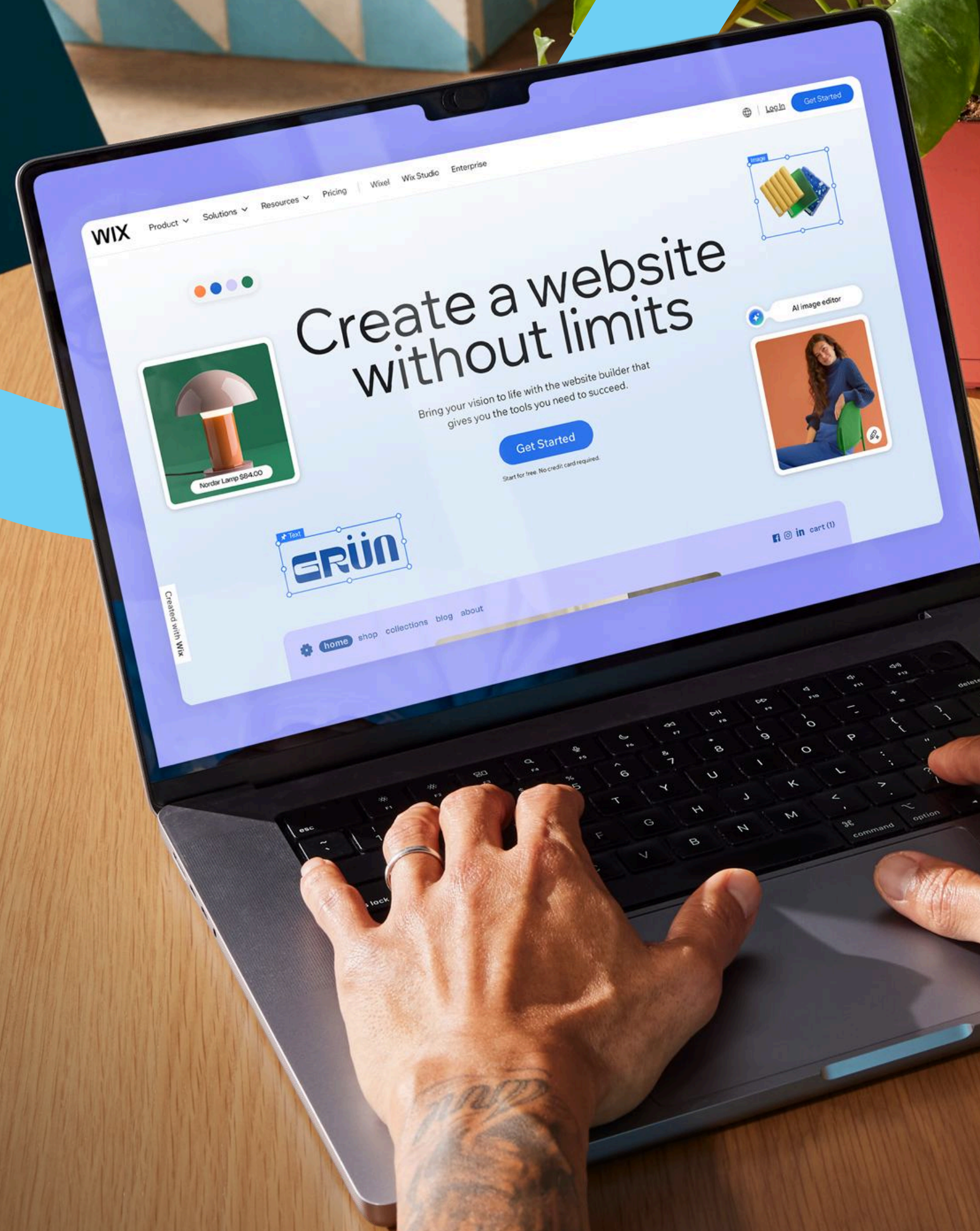
May not buy at all

16%

Doubt if it's a real business

14%

While many consumers are digitally literate enough to hunt for other touchpoints, this highlights a need for a consistent, connected digital ecosystem across web, social and review platforms.



CREATE A
TRUSTED ONLINE
PRESENCE

**76% of SBOs say a
website is crucial.
Build yours with Vista x Wix.**



Building trust: what really matters

While the nature of small businesses often invites deeper community, connection and a sense of personal care, trust isn't automatic, it's earned.

In today's social and digital landscape, consumers are naturally drawn to businesses that feel local, approachable and human. But that doesn't mean small businesses can sit back and assume trust will follow. Consumers are increasingly discerning, with **62%** saying branding is an important factor when purchasing from a new business, showing they're paying close attention to how businesses appear, both in person and online.

46%

trust small businesses and sole traders more than large corporations

Only 4%

trust chain stores and large corporations more than small businesses

What builds trust?

1

Quality products

2

Great customer service

3

Positive reviews

Loyalty isn't luck, it's strategy.

While there is an opportunity for closer alignment overall, personalization is the common thread that's creating staying power.



What small but meaningful gestures could you experiment with to help customers feel seen, such as custom discounts, a handwritten note or a message on social media?

Where small businesses are focused vs. what keeps consumers coming back:

● Small businesses ● Consumers

Branded merch

30%

37%

Engaging via social media

52%

38%

Personalized thank you cards

42%

35%

Hosting VIP events

23%

25%

Loyalty programs

37%

60%

Personalized discounts or offers

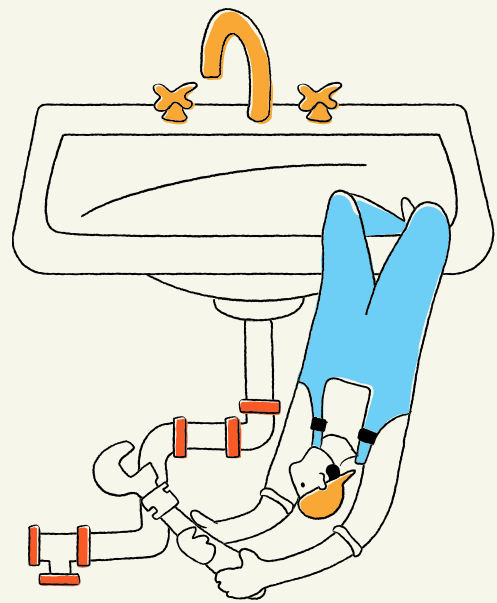
48%

66%

Your industry, explained.

Explore the data most relevant to your business by deep diving into the marketing tactics rated most effective by SBOs in your industry.

Home services & trades



Plumbers, electricians, carpenters, painters etc.

[Read more](#)

Retail



Fashion, grocery and convenience, furniture, design etc.

[Read more](#)

Hospitality



Restaurants, bars, food trucks, cafes etc.

[Read more](#)

Professional services



Real estate agents, accountants, legal, specialists etc.

[Read more](#)

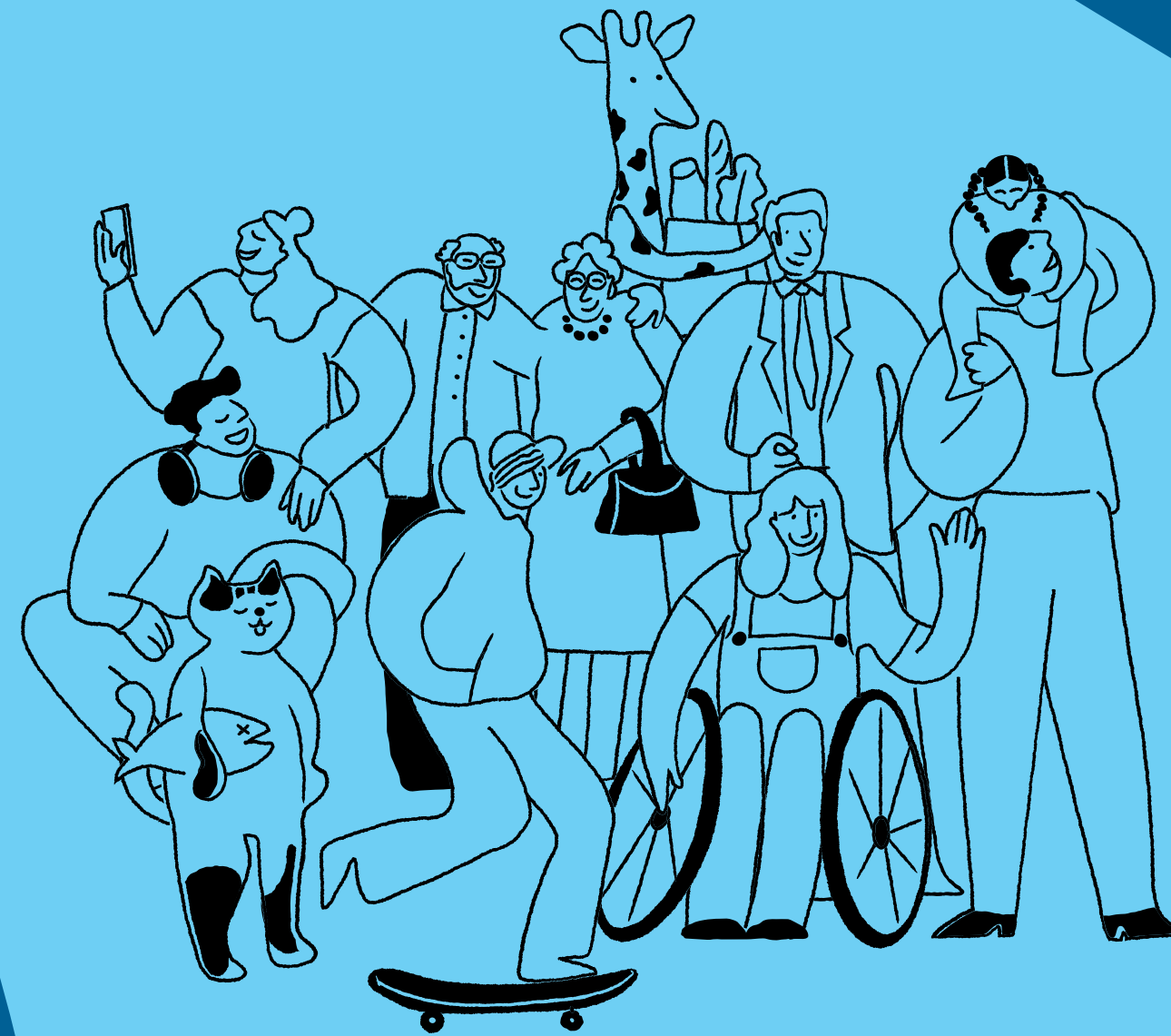
Health, beauty & fitness



Gyms, spas, studios, nutrition services etc.

[Read more](#)

Know your audience



How each generation shops, connects and commits

The generations don't just think differently, they shop differently. From the values that get them in the door to the marketing strategies that convert, the generations are showing up for small businesses in varied and surprising ways. For business owners looking to fine-tune their marketing strategy, the data reveals four different paths to community, connection and conversion.



Older generations have a soft spot for purpose-driven brands.



Older generations say they shop at small businesses to support the local economy.

Younger generations love businesses that are sustainable and environmentally conscious.



How is your brand bonding with your audience? Compared to the other generations, Gen Z and Millennials want to feel a strong emotional connection to the brands they shop with.



Younger generations say they shop at small businesses because they're after more unique products.

One value doesn't fit all

And we can see that manifest across different age groups. So, knowing how to speak to your audience and what they really care about is crucial if you're looking for an authentic connection.



But there are some things all the generations can agree on

Supporting local community issues was everyone's biggest influence when it came to shopping small.

Where do they shop?

Gen Z

45%
in person

55%
online

THE ONLY GEN
WHO PREFER IT!



Millennials

55%
in person

45%
online

Gen X

69%
in person

31%
online



Baby Boomers

83%
in person

17%
online

Digital marketing gets results

Gen Z

Social media

Millennials

Online reviews

Gen X

Search engines

Baby Boomers

Websites

Email marketing is getting less engagement from younger generations (**17%**), but remains popular with older generations (**40%**).



Discovery depends on demographics

Traditional marketing converts

Gen Z

Promo products

Millennials

TV/radio ads

Gen X

Direct mail

Baby Boomers

Direct mail

Keep it in your back pocket

Gen Z also love their business cards — nearly twice as much as any other generation!



When opposites attract

What gets them in the door?

Sometimes values and interests diverge so much that opposite approaches are required!

Direct mail & flyers

16%

Gen Z

38%

Baby Boomers

Social media

49%

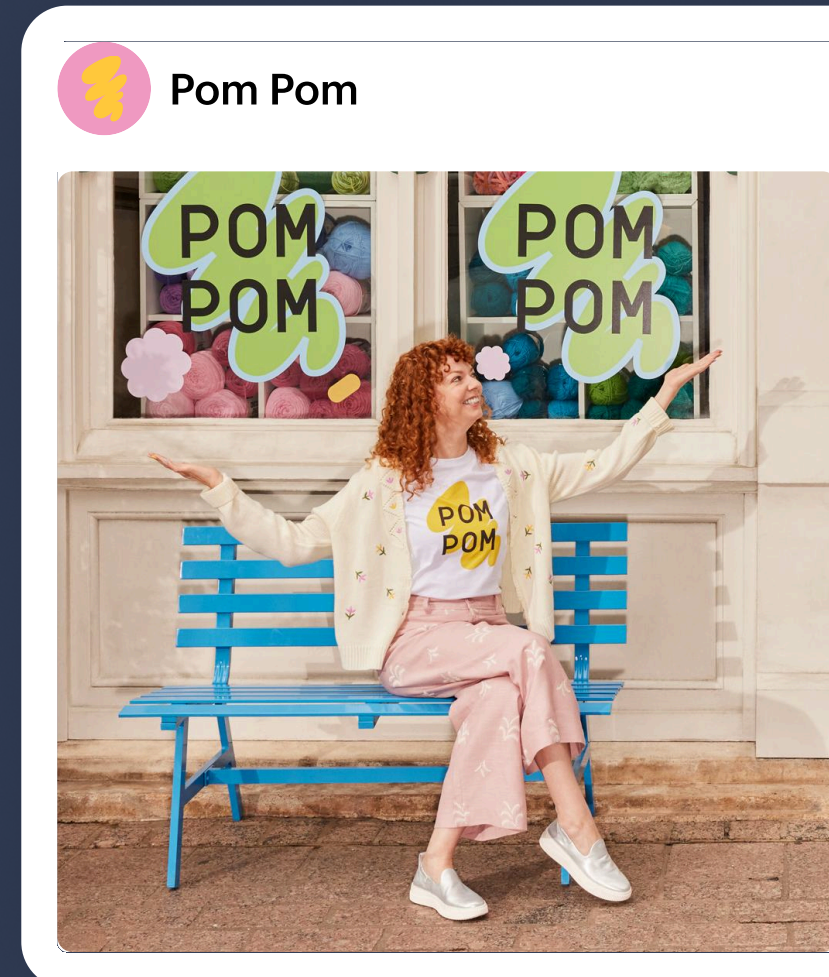
Gen Z

11%

Baby Boomers



If you're looking to create marketing that resonates with the younger generations, then a digital-first approach is the way to go. If your audience is older, then focusing more on your in-person marketing will be a safer bet.



Stickers and hoodies stand out as popular with **younger generations**, but unpopular with **older ones**.

Gen X like tote bags more than the rest!



A custom fit makes you memorable!

With certain promotional products receiving polarizing reactions, a tailored approach is key when connecting with your target audience.



Baby Boomers have a soft spot for pens.

A SENTIMENT NOT SHARED BY ANYONE ELSE



Keen for even more generational insights? Head to our blog and **[read our article](#)** for a deep dive into age-based marketing.

**If you give them
something they can
wear and share,
customers will happily
rep your brand!**



Future focus



What's next for small businesses?

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, small business owners are united in their desire to continue expanding their marketing, while consumers agree that they want to see more community connections. And AI isn't sci-fi anymore – it's firmly in the marketing mix, but not everyone agrees on its uses or merits.

2 out of 3

**businesses are planning
to grow in the next year**

63%

**want more support for
community issues and events**

No matter which way you slice it, consumers are looking for businesses to lean into their local communities more.

55%

**want small businesses to
grow their online connections**

*DON'T NEGLECT YOUR
WEBSITE OR SOCIALS!*

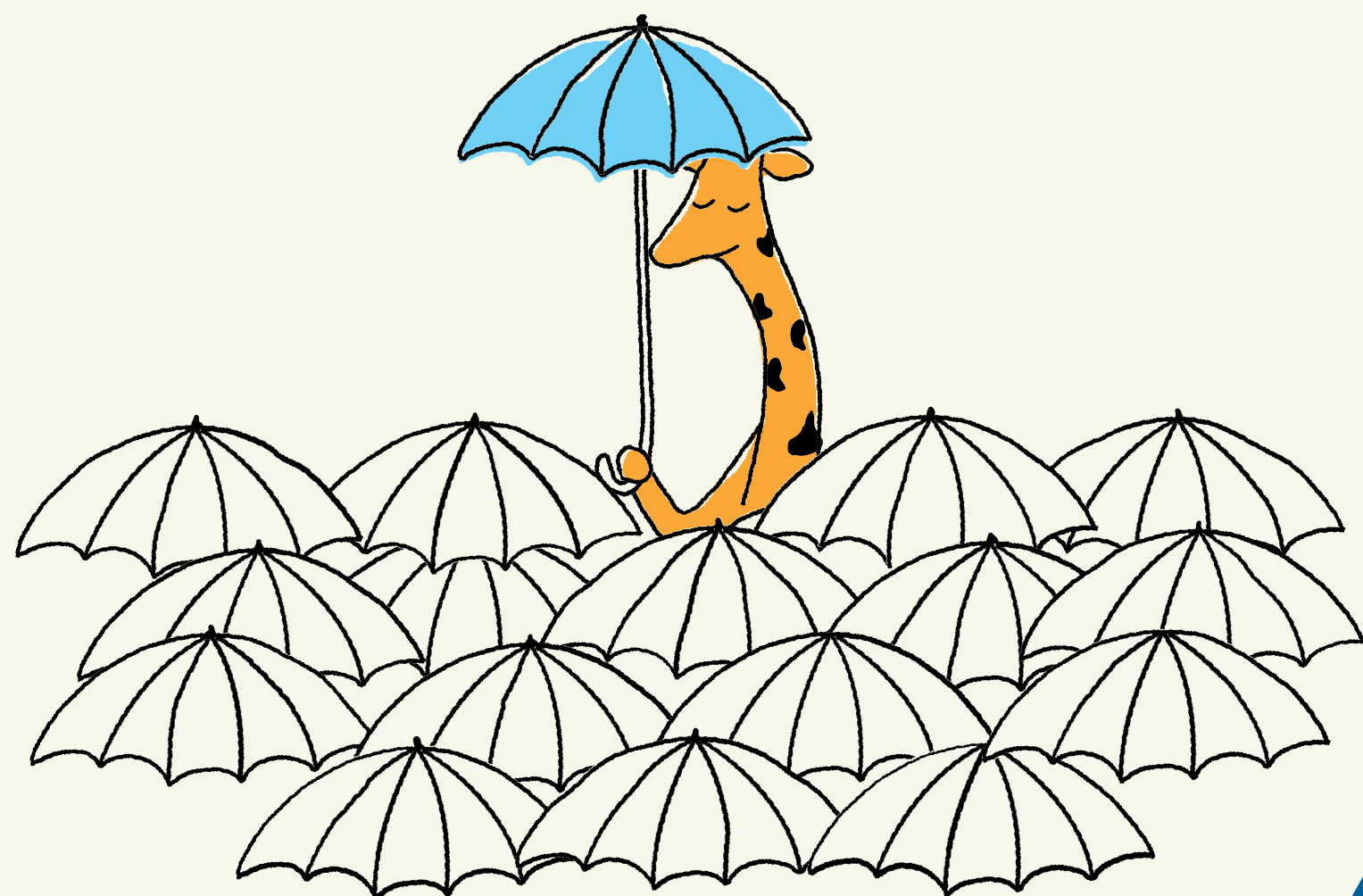
55%

**want more collaborations
with other small businesses**

Collaborations with other local businesses can increase your reach (for both of you!) and deepen your community relationships.



**Looking ahead,
consumers want more
community, connection
& collaboration.**



It's great to see that so many small business owners feel confident in their ability to expand and grow! What are your ambitious plans for the year ahead?

Adapting to change and making room to grow

SBOs' priorities in the next 12 months:

- 1 Increase revenue and acquire more customers
- 2 Refine and improve their products and services
- 3 Launch a new product or service



Small, agile and mighty

Businesses with one to four employees were the most likely to want to increase revenue and acquire more customers, as well as refine and improve their current product or service. But they were least likely to want to increase the size of their team!



New year new focus

4 out of 5

businesses plan to invest
more in their marketing
in the next 12 months

Where do small businesses plan to invest?

Traditional marketing

14%

Digital marketing

34%

A balance of both

33%

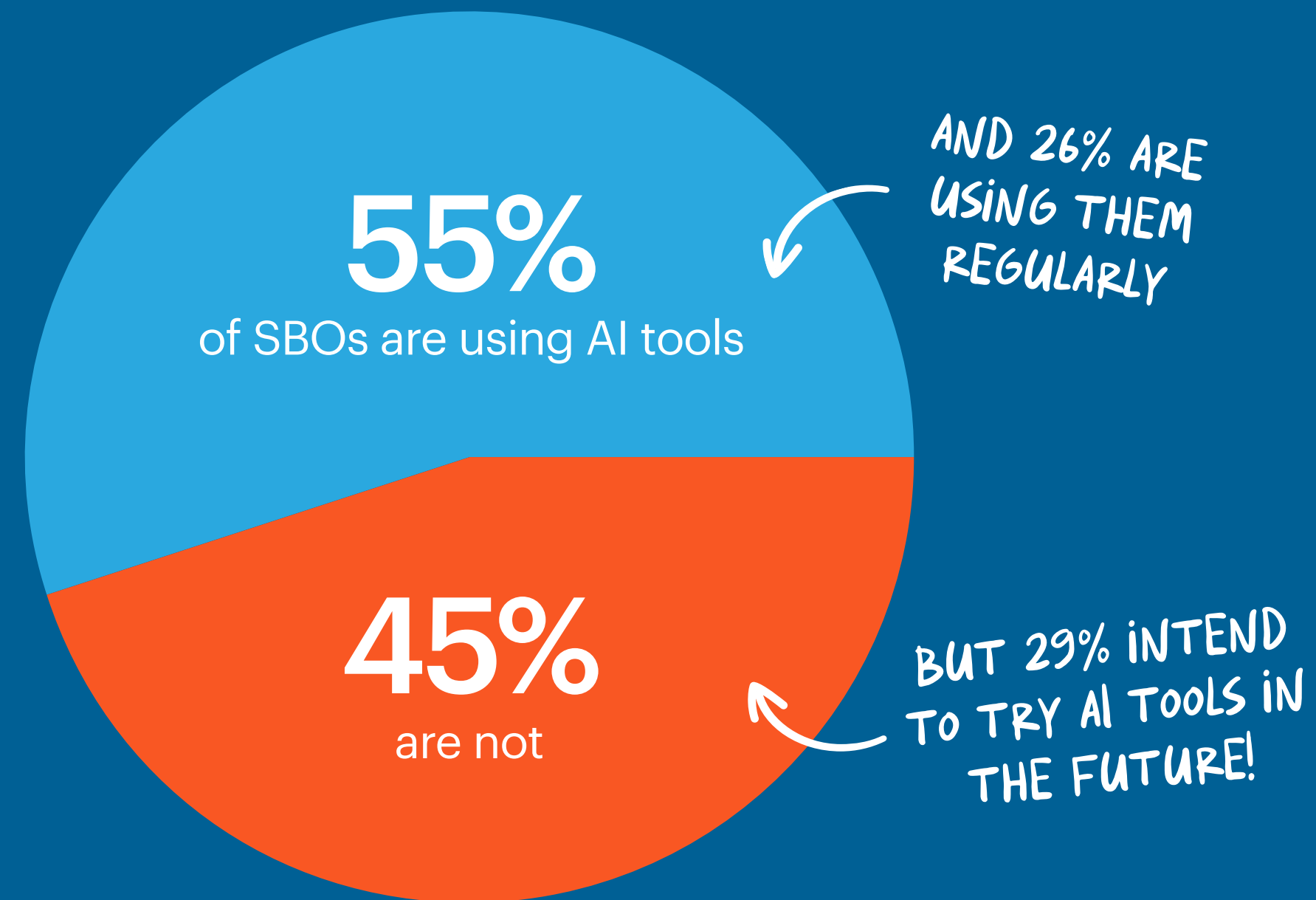
No changes planned

19%

In the age of AI

65% are interested in using AI

Whether it's an indispensable tool or an expensive distraction, artificial intelligence is now more ubiquitous than ever, and small businesses are experimenting with ways it can boost their marketing efforts.



AI is a budding sidekick for SBOs

BUT BUSINESSES OVER 20 YEARS OLD ARE MORE HESITANT

21% aren't sure

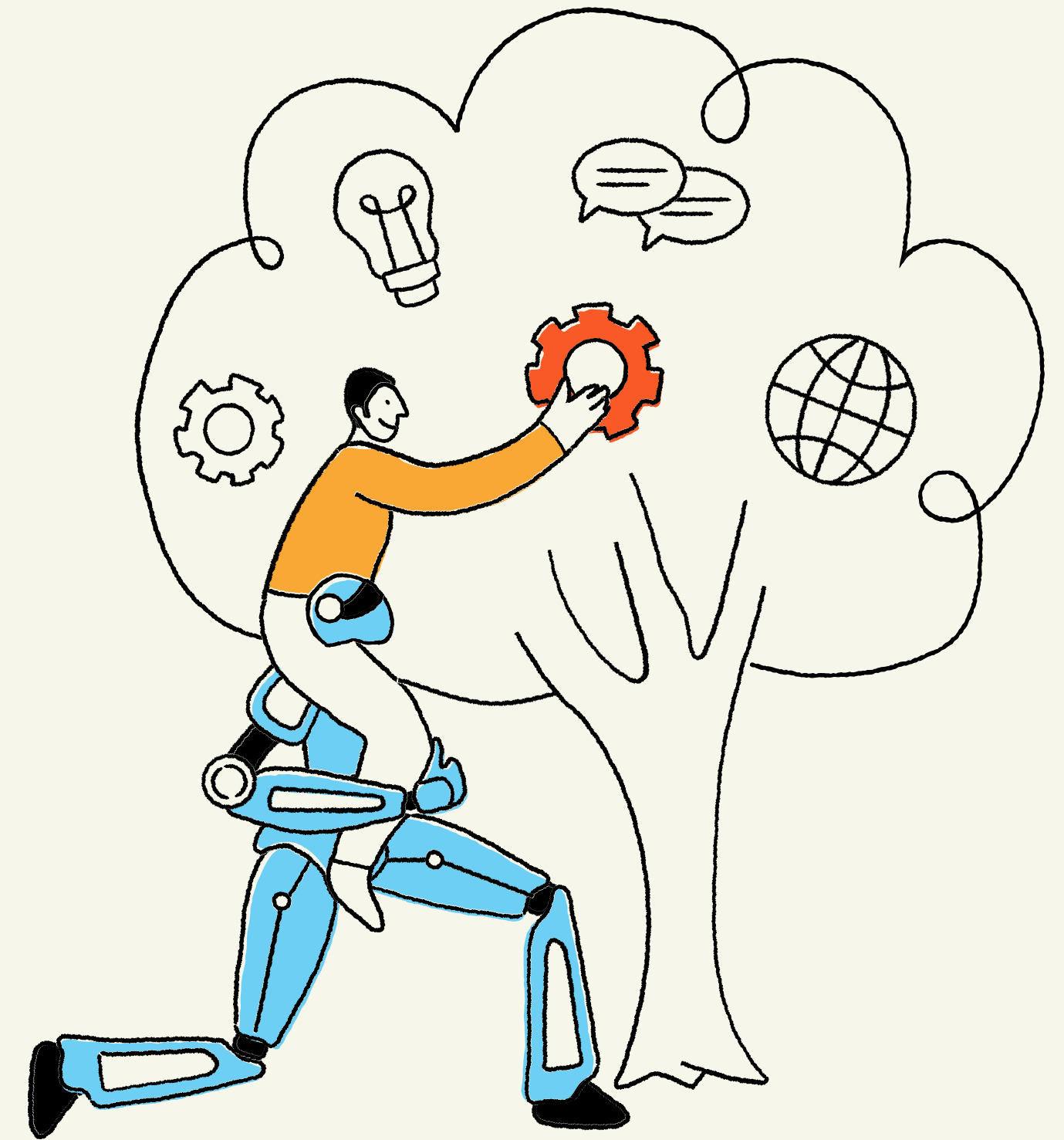
only 14% aren't interested

How AI is supporting small businesses:

- 1 Personalizing their marketing
- 2 Saving time on marketing tasks
- 3 Automating content

Surprisingly, the least reported use was support with admin tasks, implying that SBOs are most interested in AI's creative and content-focused output.

Helping or hindering?



An opposition to AI tools is not the reason skeptics are hesitant...

41%
are not sure how
to get started
with AI tools

32%
prefer to create their
own marketing content
and strategies

30%
are concerned
about potential
hidden charges



Check out **Strategies in motion** for a full breakdown on the digital tactics small businesses are experimenting with!

Final thoughts

When it comes to the state of small business marketing in 2025, we can see that it's anything but linear. There are ups and downs, challenges and opportunities, but the undeniable theme in this year's data is that businesses and consumers are seeking the same thing: community.

It's the antidote to competition and the pathway to connection. For small business owners, it's a loyal audience that shows up to support them every day. For consumers, it's their local cafe, clothing store or electrician whose services and products they can count on and trust.

Because great marketing isn't just about clicks and conversions, it's about building something that lasts, something that never stops, something that flows.

Staying in flow



Need marketing ideas for your small business?



VistaPrint is the design and marketing partner to thousands of small businesses around the world. We help small business owners bring their ideas to life through custom print products, easy-to-use digital tools and expert design support. When it comes to marketing your small business, VistaPrint is here to help.



Wix makes website creation simple for everyone. Our powerful website builder and business solutions are designed to grow with you, no matter where your ideas take you next. Create without limits, and build with tomorrow in mind.

Head to vistaprint.com/hub for helpful tips, practical advice and inspirational stories – for small businesses just like yours.



Industry Breakdowns



Home services & trades

[< Back to industry list](#)

Standout stats

75% feel more comfortable connecting in person rather than online (higher than any other industry).

51% rank ties with the local community as having the biggest impact on their business.

Promotional products

They favor branded items that reflect their practical nature.

Their top three products are:

- 1 Pens
- 2 T-shirts
- 3 Stickers

Digital

Their top three digital marketing tactics are:

- 62%** Social media (highest of any industry)
- 47%** Online reviews
- 45%** Websites

Traditional

Their top three tactics they couldn't live without are:

- 67%** Business cards
- 31%** Flyers
- 30%** Promotional products

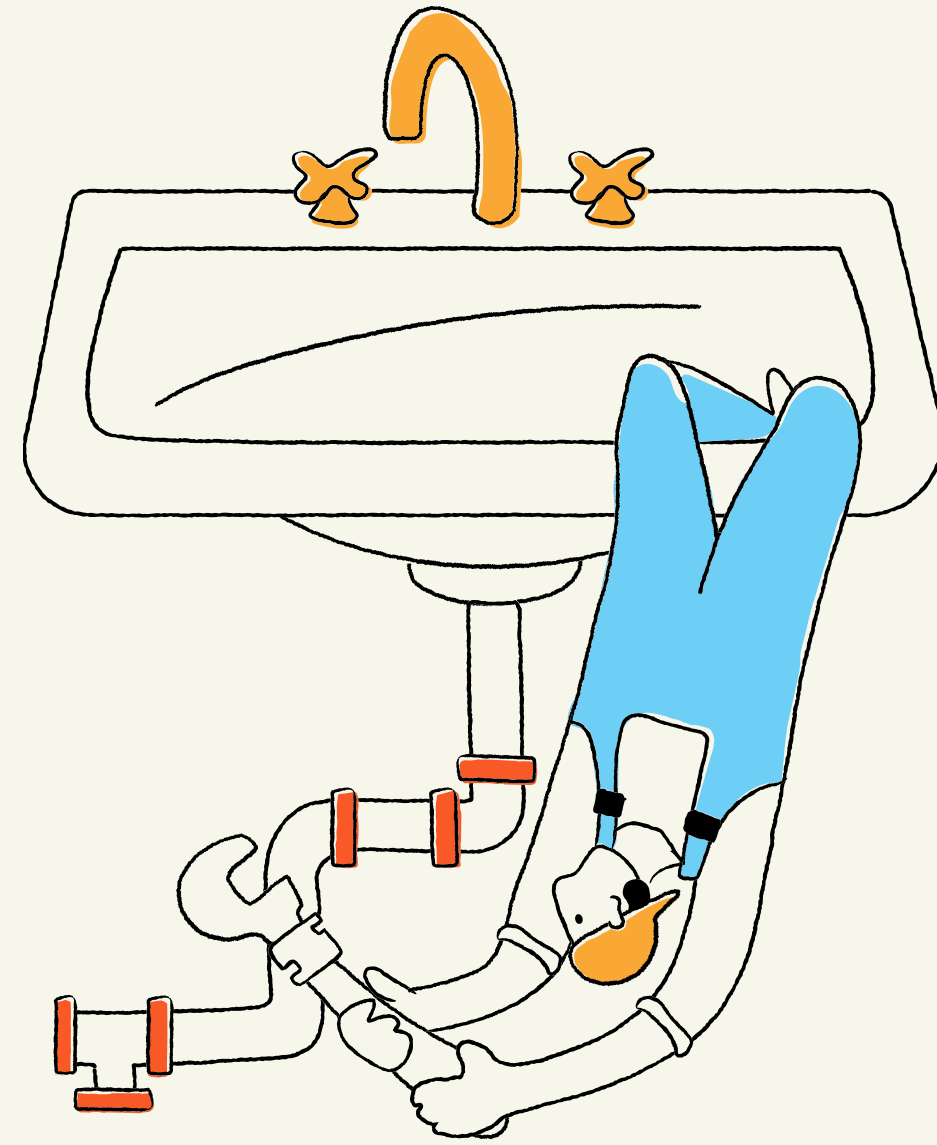
Building loyalty and trust

In this industry loyalty and trust stem from personal connections and consistent service quality.

Their top three loyalty tactics are:

- 45%** Personalized discounts or offers
- 45%** Personalized thank you cards
- 39%** Engaging via social media

Retail

[< Back to industry list](#)

Standout stats

40% say an online presence has had the biggest impact on their business in the last 12 months (higher than any other industry).

63% say they're more comfortable connecting online rather than in person.

Promotional products

Retail businesses favor hoodies, key rings and socks more than other industries, reflecting a diverse approach to branded merchandise.

Their top three products are:

- 1 T-shirts
- 2 Stickers
- 3 Pens

Digital

The retail industry places significant emphasis on digital channels, aligning closely with consumer expectations.

Their top three digital marketing tactics are:

- 58%** Social media
- 48%** Websites
- 45%** Online reviews

Traditional

Their top three traditional marketing tactics they couldn't live without are:

- 53%** Business cards
- 35%** Promotional products
- 33%** Events and tradeshows

Building loyalty and trust

Despite their comfort with online interactions, retail SBOs understand the importance of keeping relationships personal.

Their top three loyalty tactics are:

- 58%** Engaging via social media (highest of any industry)
- 53%** Personalized discounts or offers
- 45%** Personalized thank you cards

Hospitality

[< Back to industry list](#)

Standout stats

There's a strong emphasis on being physically accessible and community-oriented in hospitality.

62% of SBOs plan to continue growing their offline community in the next 12 months rather than their online presence (**38%**), higher than any other industry!

Promotional products

SBOs make use of branded merch that resonates with their casual, social environments.

Their top three products are:

- 1 T-shirts
- 2 Drinkware
- 3 Pens

Digital

Their top three digital marketing tactics are:

- 59%** Websites
- 49%** Social media
- 43%** Online reviews

Traditional

In the hospitality space, traditional marketing is most focused on the local community.

Their top three tactics are:

- 45%** Promotional products
- 38%** Business cards
- 37%** Loyalty cards (only industry where this was in the top three)

Building loyalty and trust

When it comes to creating repeat customers, the top loyalty tactics reflect the industry's focus on personal connection and brand experience.

Their top three loyalty tactics are:

- 56%** Loyalty program (highest of any industry)
- 48%** Personalized discounts or offers
- 45%** Engaging via social

Professional services

[< Back to industry list](#)

Standout stats

These businesses are more likely to operate in very competitive markets **(37%)** compared to other sectors.

This highlights just how important fine-tuning your marketing is, as standing out from the competition doesn't happen by accident!

Promotional products

SBOs favor practical items that align with their industry's professional tone.

Their top three products are:

- 1 Pens
- 2 T-shirts
- 3 Drinkware

Digital

Their top three digital marketing tactics are:

- 58%** Websites
- 51%** Social media
- 38%** Search engine optimization

Traditional

Their top three traditional tactics are:

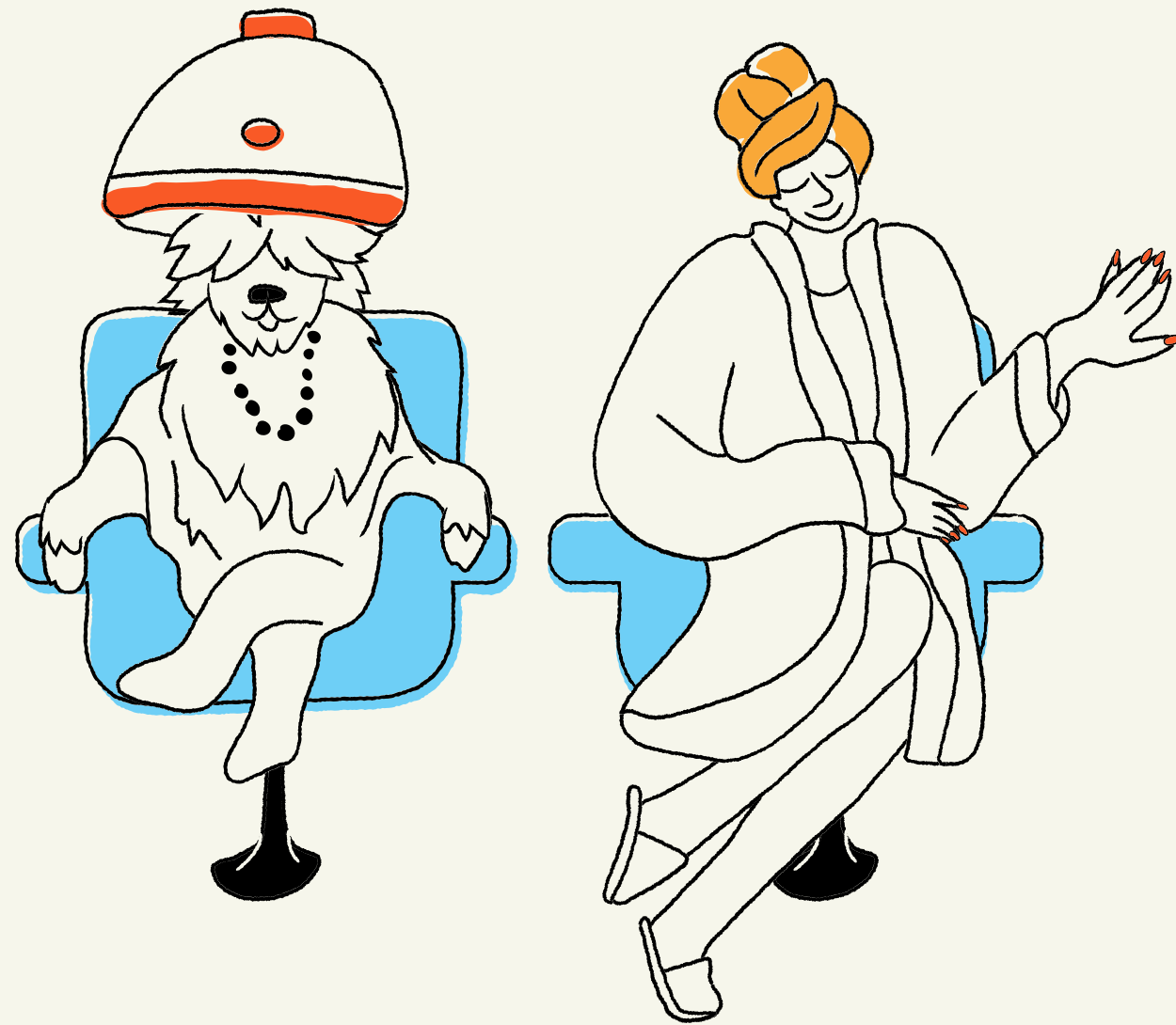
- 62%** Business cards
- 37%** Direct mail
- 34%** Events and tradeshow

Building loyalty and trust

Their top three loyalty tactics are:

- 52%** Engaging via social
- 42%** Personalized discounts or offers
- 42%** Personalized thank you cards

Health, beauty & fitness

[< Back to industry list](#)

Standout stats

Compared to other industries, these businesses are more likely to see other SBOs as their primary competition **(62%)** rather than large chains or corporations **(38%)**.

Promotional products

Their top three products are:

- 1 T-shirts
- 2 Pens
- 3 Stickers

Digital

Their top three digital marketing tactics are:

- 61%** Social media
- 51%** Websites
- 47%** Online reviews

Traditional

Given the in-person nature of many these businesses, a consistent physical presence to reinforce brand visibility and encourage local foot traffic is important.

Their top three traditional marketing tactics:

- 61%** Business cards
- 33%** Flyers
- 32%** Promotional products

Building loyalty and trust

Loyalty in this industry comes from personal connection and consistent positive experiences.

Their top three loyalty tactics are:

- 57%** Engaging via social
- 54%** Personalized discounts or offers (highest of any industry)
- 38%** Personalized thank you cards

